

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARIZONA ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TASK FORCE

August 15, 2007

1:30 p.m., MST

The Arizona English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force met in Room 1 of the Arizona Senate Building, 1700 W. Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona. Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. MST.

1. Call to Order

Present:

Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman

Dr. John Baracy

Mr. Jim DiCello

Dr. Eugene Garcia

Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan

Ms. Johanna Haver

Ms. Eileen Klein

Ms. Karen Merritt

Absent:

Ms. Anna Rosas

A quorum was present for the purpose of conducting business.

2. Discussion of Recent Task Force Activities

Chairman Alan Maguire held this agenda item until later in the meeting so that Dr. Eugene Garcia could be present.

Later in the meeting, Mr. Maguire returned to this agenda item. He reviewed the recent activity regarding the draft SEI Models that were submitted to the JLBC for review as required by statute. The JLBC met on July 19, reviewed the draft SEI Models, asked questions of Mr. Maguire concerning the models, but did not vote regarding the document. The Task Force members were given copies of e-mails and comments received by August 8, 2007 related to the two public hearings held in early August.

3. Approval of April 12, 2007; April 26, 2007; May 3, 2007; May 17, 2004; May 24, 2007; and June 14, 2007 minutes of Task Force meetings

Chairman Alan Maguire held this agenda item to the next meeting to allow the Task Force members time to review the minutes for any edits.

4. Discussion and Possible Amendment and/or Action on Structured English Immersion Models based on the June 15, 2007 draft version

Chairman Alan Maguire reviewed the past month's Task Force activities. Two public hearings were held to allow comment on the submitted draft SEI Models dated June 14, 2007. On August 1st a public hearing was held in Tucson, and on August 2nd a public hearing was held in Phoenix to allow for testimony. Copies of all testimony and e-mails were distributed to all the Task Force members.

Mr. Maguire noted a few areas of concern from the testimony and e-mails: evidence of lack of understanding of how the models will work and questions about the law. He suggested that the Task Force discuss these issues. Two issues raised were: (1) the requirement of four hours of English Language Development (ELD) for the second year of the ELL program models and beyond; and, (2) the use of academic content in ELD classes. There were also many practical questions about teacher training and the implementation schedule.

Mr. Maguire addressed two questions raised at the public hearings: how high schools will award credits for ELD classes and how the models will permit a timely graduation and fulfill graduation requirements. Mr. Maguire commented that some districts have graduation requirements above and beyond those required by the State Board. In those cases, it might be better to look at state requirements instead of district requirements. Mr. Maguire stated that the philosophy of the models was based on the principles set up for the models, that English proficiency is "antecedent to success in mainstream" classrooms. The law gives some guidance on this. It may be unreasonable and unfair to expect a new ELL high school student who scores Pre-Emergent on AZELLA to attain all of the elementary and middle school learning as well as the high school learning in the English language and to graduate on time. In some cases it might be appropriate to give students extra time.

Ms. Karen Merritt commented that her district always started with high expectations. She stated that she has seen many ELL students graduate in four years, although some do not, but that the models should not prevent graduation on time for students who otherwise would be able to graduate. She added that much depends on the level of education in the primary language. Ms. Merritt stated that she wanted to make sure there is not an artificial barrier preventing advancement.

Dr. Eugene Garcia said that he had heard of circumstances where the four hour block doesn't make sense — a student may have excellent math skills, for example, and benefit more from a math class. He stated that the Task Force needs to create models with built-in flexibility, so that districts and schools are not prevented from making the best decisions. Ms. Merritt stated she supports the four hours of ELD during the first year, but wants flexibility for the subsequent

years. Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan stated that districts give different credits depending on the district policy. Now that the state has ELL proficiency standards that align directly to the state academic standards, districts should give English credits even for Pre-Emergent ELD classes. If students take ELD a second year, it should be a second English credit. She stated that she hopes by students' junior year, they would be in mainstream classes and on track for graduation. She commented that students' English proficiency was probably more important than the time in which they graduate.

Ms. Johanna Haver asked Ms. Garcia Dugan if she thought four hours were necessary for the second year. Ms. Garcia Dugan replied that she definitely favored four hours for the first year, and that hopefully if students needed ELD instruction the second year, they could take four hours for the first semester and then test out into the mainstream. She said that she was hesitant to lessen the four hours; if two hours do not prove sufficient, then ELLs would be kept in the program longer.

Mr. Maguire explained that the way he saw the program working is that the same material must be covered, whether it be in two hours or four hours. If the requirement was lessened to two hours for the second year, schools would not be able to combine first and second year ELLs because the class curriculum would be different; the second year class would have to cover twice as much material condensed into two hours. This would force the creation of more classes and be a possible scheduling problem. He added that there is a possible solution. While the ELL status of students are determined by their composite AZELLA scores, it is possible that in certain areas they might test "proficient" at a domain level, for example, in reading. If students test proficient in a certain area, they could perhaps not be required to take that course. Thus, if a second year ELL student is proficient in reading, but not in writing or oral language, he or she might be exempted from the reading class, but not the other three hours of ELD. This would still allow teachers to have both first and second year ELLs in their class.

Ms. Merritt agreed, stating that in this fashion, the second year might range from two to four hours. Dr. Garcia stated that he appreciated the discussion in dealing with this heterogeneity in students and giving options to move students ahead. Ms. Haver stated that if a large number of students need reading ELD, a teacher could change content from year to year to deal with second year students so that students aren't reading the same materials. Ms. Garcia Dugan stated that she would not like students to have to remain in ELL classes for more than two years. She said that if this option doesn't yield results, it may have to be modified. Ms. Merritt stated that in her observations, grammar is the one main area holding ELLs at the Intermediate level. Intermediates need a high focus on grammar and reading and could take a mainstream class and not oral language. Mr. Maguire commented that the high school schedule allows flexibility. If ELLs are grouped by their sub-levels, another option would be for students to take Basic Reading and Writing, but Intermediate Oral and Grammar.

Next, Mr. Kevin Clark, consultant, offered to explain the polarity of views concerning content in ELD classes and where the current draft models falls in that continuum. He said that he assumes schools and districts already have selected reading materials and curriculums, so the content of

the ELD Reading class is already chosen by the districts. He said that removes reading from the discussion. He stated that writing also has math, science, and social studies built directly into the proficiency standards; students could write about a science project, build a mathematic equation, or write a report on history. Thus, content is also a part of the Writing ELD class and does not need to be discussed. Mr. Clark stated that the question of content most concerns primarily the areas of Oral Language and Grammar.

Mr. Clark drew a diagram of the polarity of philosophies, a straight line with “Structure” at one end and “Acquisition” at the other. He stated that on the side of Structure, the class looks like four hours of “drill and kill.” The focus of the course is rule mastery, such as the ability to conjugate all verb tenses. The outcome is productive perfection. The subject is the rules of English grammar. The agent is the teacher, who drives instruction based on a hierarchical order of language skills. He explained that this is pure language with no content.

At the other end is “Acquisition,” where understanding and comprehension are more important than rule mastery. The outcome here is the ability to use the language. If it is comprehensible, perfection is not needed. The agent here is the student, who must put together the rules based on the content presented by the teacher. There is much academic content at this end of the spectrum, but no clear language objectives are taught. The outcome is receptive competence. Mr. Clark added that there can be problems with student mobility using this approach since it is unknown what concepts have been covered from class to class.

Ms. Haver commented that she has had to deal with this polarity as a teacher. She stated that one side is so tight nothing fits, and the other side is too loose. Her classes used a mixture of the two methods, teaching structure at an appropriate level, with content to give a context. Dr. Garcia stated that these polarities don’t exist in the field, and that educators need to do both. As a researcher, he has seen that the TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) Standards as well as the Arizona ELL Proficiency Standards do a good job of bringing both sides together. Ms. Garcia Dugan said that the training will want to focus on this, the integration of both. Ms. Haver stressed that rules need to be taught, then used, then reviewed for retention.

Mr. Clark explained that the ELL Proficiency Standards have proficiencies for performing a task, such as writing a recipe. The Discrete Skills Inventory (DSI) will explain the rules and the skills necessary to perform that task, such as nouns, prepositions, etc. Texts should be selected based on the discrete skill being taught. In order to teach past tense, for example, text that showcases past tense would be chosen. The skill being learned would have to be not just incidentally found in the text, but specifically. It is by matching proficiencies to pertinent text and teaching them sequentially that the models will be able to move students to English language proficiency in one year’s time.

Dr. Garcia noted that the Task Force does not have the DSI yet. He stated that instruction may fall more on the structure side with use of the DSI. He suggested an interaction between content and the DSI, rather than having DSI dictate content. Dr. Garcia again stressed the need for flexibility. Ms. Haver commented that certain elements of grammar are not easy to learn with

just content, and verb tenses are a good example of this. Ms. Merritt commented that one can't always go in a strict order, though she agrees some skills have to come before others. Mr. Clark stated there is a general order, so that different districts are covering similar things, but that the order is not rigidly specific. He said that this is why the models falls into the middle ground. The objective in the oral and grammar classes will be a skill, where the content supports this skill. Ms. Garcia Dugan defined the DSI as a sequential and focused manner of learning skills.

Ms. Merritt stated that she was concerned about teaching to the Advanced level of the standards to move the students through. Mr. Maguire stated that the teacher's objective is to move the children as far as the class allows them. Ms. Eileen Klein stated that the models seems to stop after the DSI. The models need to say that the content follows from the DSI, to clarify this point for the field, and show the centrist position. Ms. Haver and Ms. Garcia Dugan agreed with this suggestion in making the statement more overt. The classes should be "content rich," not using low level or limiting materials. There was general agreement to add the definition of the DSI to the draft models.

Dr. Garcia stated that the Task Force needs a clear understanding of the fiscal mandate of the models they are proposing. They need to run some analysis of the costs involved in different schools with different situations. There may need to be some flexibility in the models for financially reasonable options where necessary. He stated that some schools and districts have OCR agreements relating to transporting students and other measures, which may affect how the school or district can implement an ELL models. He added that they may run into federal violations of OCR in order to follow the models. He asked for a study of this.

Mr. Maguire stated that he has been doing some research on transporting students. He didn't have any suggestions, but would continue to study the issues. Dr. John Baracy commented that the Task Force is charged with developing a cost-efficient models and agrees that running a cost analysis is necessary to determine if this is being accomplished. He also requested the Task Force consult legal counsel regarding how the models will work with schools with OCR agreements, since it could be problematic. Dr. Baracy questioned what the Arizona Department of Education has budgeted for the 2007-2008 school year for this models, or if the funding exists yet. Ms. Haver commented that guidance is being given in the form of the draft models even if the models are not finished yet. Dr. Garcia stressed the need for ongoing assessments as part of the models to measure instruction, and that AZELLA should not be the only measure. He suggested that the DSI could have assessments built in to measure progress.

Ms. Haver commented that Kindergarten and 1st grade often have phonic-based programs in place such as Reading First, which have yielded good results. She suggested allowing models which used these types of programs.

5. Discussion of Structured English Immersion (SEI) budget request forms

Mr. Alan Maguire discussed the draft Budget Request Form (Attachment A) and asked that the Task Force review it. Once schools turn in the budget request, it becomes part of a larger form for districts to submit as part of their full budget request.

Dr. John Baracy asked for clarification on the first sentence on page one. Mr. Maguire said it was appropriate to alert schools that there is litigation in process that may change the funding. Ms. Eileen Klein wanted to strike this from the document, stating it would be more appropriate in a separate communication and not on the actual budget form. Dr. Baracy again called this an unfunded mandate, and that it may box districts in, forcing them to spend beyond their budget for startup costs. He recommended that if this was the case, the Task Force should submit something to the legislature to amend or change this. He suggested an amendment to call for additional expenditures for the program. Mr. Jim DiCello stated that could be built into the document. Ms. Karen Merritt stated that she was troubled by the language referring to numbers counted at the end of the fiscal year. The districts already have different dates on which students are counted; there is the 100th day, the three dates for ELL counts, and the dates for AMAOs. She wondered how this would affect numbers. Dr. Baracy added that he was also concerned that the term “Desegregation Funding” was too general. He requested that the Task Force consult legal counsel. Dr. Eugene Garcia requested that an expert walk the Task Force through this form in a future meeting.

6. Discussion of Implementation Schedule of SEI Models

Mr. Alan Maguire stated that there were a number of questions from the public hearings regarding implementation of the models and the implementation schedule. He said that training would be a powerful tool to reduce anxiety and fear of the models. Three kinds of training are called for in the draft models. The first training is a basic understanding of Arizona Revised Statute. The second will be an introduction of the DSI and what it entails, and the last will be the actual use of DSI in the classroom and the exact methods of teaching ELD. This will answer questions such as what students are expected to learn, how mobility will be affected, what the content will be, and what methods will be used. He invited Mr. John Stollar from ADE to give an update on the department’s activities.

Mr. John Stollar stated that it was difficult to give the field information when the Task Force has not yet completed its activities. He stated that until there are final approved models, he can’t give any definitive information. ADE has already determined a training schedule for their staff members and are working on setting up meetings to prepare schools. The first round of meetings will be general information that everybody needs. The second round will go into the content of training. There will also be specific assistance as requested by schools or districts. The final round will be a review and an opportunity for feedback from the schools to solve any problems encountered. ADE is integrating Task Force decisions into the established structure, so that when the Task Force has the final models, ADE will be ready to proceed.

Mr. Stollar added that with the timing right now, aiming for an ideal implementation will be difficult. Likely, the implementation will not be full scale, and so the first year will need to be looked at differently, so that it doesn't compromise the results. Mr. Stollar said that ADE is ready to give the Task Force some cost estimates with the information they have at the moment, but with many assumptions the estimates may or may not be correct.

Dr. John Baracy asked that if the Task Force approves the draft models, whether schools would adopt it this year. Mr. Stollar replied that would be up to the Task Force and that it would realistically depend on the readiness of the school. He said that there is still much Task Force work to be done before implementation will be able to go forward. Dr. Baracy inquired about the September 1st date for approval of the models. Mr. Stollar replied that ADE would take steps to get the information out with regional meetings on the basics of the models including the history, parameters, options, and the budget form. ADE would give schools time to review this information, for example, two or three weeks. Next, training on the content instruction would begin. Mr. Stollar stated that the longer the Task Force takes, the less implementation will be possible this year, due to staffing and other issues. Dr. Baracy asked if schools would be held accountable this year. Mr. Stollar replied that again this would be up to the Task Force, but with less than a full implementation, considerations should be made. Dr. Baracy asked how many dollars have been budgeted for implementation this year. Mr. Stollar replied that none has been set aside at this time. Funding will only come when the budget request forms are filled out and submitted. ADE will review the forms, compile the amount, and submit it to the legislature, which will allocate the funding. Currently, there are no dollars allocated in the budget.

Ms. Haver commented that the university should cooperate with the Task Force in building their education classes so that there is a similar philosophy. Dr. Garcia replied that universities would inform students of current policy, but that different professors are always going to have differing views.

Mr. Maguire stated that the law called for a series of tasks. The law stated that the models be approved by September 1st, 2006, yet the law did not come into effect until after that date. Mr. Maguire stated that taking out the year, the sequence of events still makes sense. The Task Force must adopt models, train, budget, build classes, and implement. He stated that he looks at it being a year later. He added that practically it is impossible to have followed the law in the schedule, but it is still possible to proceed in a certain sequence during this school year.

Dr. Baracy stated that he appreciated this view. He said that there is a disconnect between the funding and the implementation and that it does not merely take funding to run the models, but that there are also some costs up front to implement the models, including training and changing class schedules. He stated that this needs to be addressed and that he wants have this discussion again. Ms. Merritt stated that toward the end of last school year, ADE had sent out a letter encouraging schools to follow the four hour requirement of the law. Ms. Garcia Dugan said that, other than reiterating that the law requires four hours of ELD, the Superintendent has provided no further guidance to the field.

Dr. Baracy stated that the school districts are not required to take action until the Task Force has completed its task of developing models, and if funding is needed as a result of directions from ADE, the Task Force should address this.

7. Presentation and Discussion of Upcoming Task Force Activities

Mr. Alan Maguire stated that in the upcoming Task Force meetings the Task Force first needs to work through requested changes to the draft models to create final models and approve them. Next, the Task Force needs to consider a formal process for schools and districts to submit alternate models and a review process for those models, including any necessary documentation. The Task Force needs to edit and finalize the Budget Request Form so that schools can request funding. Finally, the Task Force needs to consider a rigorous schedule in order to accomplish these tasks. Mr. Maguire recommended a set date for meetings each month and a regular schedule that could be adopted for the first year of implementation. This would ease the problem of finding meeting times.

Mr. Maguire asked for the Task Force members to fill out their September availability sheets.

8. Call to the Public

Mr. Alan Maguire made a call to the public at 3:43 p.m.

The first speaker was Mr. Andrew Morrill from the Arizona Educators Association. He stated that he appreciated hearing flexibility identified as a concern. He stated that there are requests for the integration of SEI and academic content in the models. He asked that the Task Force take into consideration the funding reality. He said that he hoped that they would continue to allow districts some flexibility. He stated that the law did not require homogeneous grouping, and that the letter sent by Tom Horne mentioned the inclusion of content in ELD. Mr. Morrill stated that districts are being asked to begin implementing now and are taking steps in their hiring and class schedules. He stated that ADE emails have said that ELLs should be grouped by language levels. Mr. Morrill stated this was not the law.

The second speaker was Ms. Sheryl Green from Laveen Elementary School District. She asked that the Task Force be clear in their communications, because when communication with the field is not clear, people make things up. She said she was grateful that the Task Force was working on a draft of the budget form but that she felt concern coming from a district that is already booked to capacity. She stressed that if capital funding is not built into the budget form, space becomes an issue. They need additional classrooms to build additional classes as prescribed by the draft models.

Ms. Green also asked the Task Force to consider ADE's counting method since there tend to be more Pre-Emergent and Emergent ELLs at the beginning of the school year and fewer by the end. This can also affect the budget, as more Pre-Emergent classes may be required than the

numbers, taken throughout the year, reflect. Her last concern was that teachers may be attempting to implement the draft models without proper training. She asked that the training be put into place quickly.

9. Discussion of future meetings

Mr. Alan Maguire asked the Task Force members to turn in their September availability dates.

10. Adjournment

The motion was made by Dr. John Baracy to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan. The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Arizona ELL Task Force

Alan Maguire, Chairman